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Movies

The Last Days of Bruce Lee

An exclusive excerpt from 'Bruce Lee: A Life,' the new biography of the late martial arts icon

Getty Images/Ringer illustration

By Matthew Polly May 29, 2018, 6:00 am EDT • 24 min

The morning of July 20, 1973, Bruce typed a letter to his American attorney, Adrian Marshall, about several big deals on the table including the multi-picture offer from Warner Bros. and a proposal from Hanna-Barbera to create an animated series based on his life. There were also offers for books, clothing, and endorsements. Bruce Lee was building an empire.

After finishing his letter and posting it, Bruce left his mansion in Kowloon Tong and drove to Golden Harvest's studios. He met with George Lazenby, the Australian James Bond, to further discuss his participation in Game of Death. As the only native English speaker at the studio, Andre Morgan joined them. Since Bruce had already shot much of the ending of the film, the goal was to come up with ways to work Lazenby into the story. "We sat around shooting the shit," Morgan recalls.

Simon & Schuster

After the meeting, Bruce swung by Raymond Chow's office to say that he wanted Lazenby in Game of Death. Chow suggested they all go out to dinner to formalize the deal. Bruce returned to Morgan's office. He pulled out his bag of hash and offered some to Andre. They both had a nibble. Bruce and Andre were supposed to take George out to lunch, but Bruce had other plans and canceled. He wanted to visit Betty Ting Pei's apartment for a "nooner." The studio's driver took Lazenby back to his hotel. Bruce promised to be back at the studio in the afternoon to settle how much money they were

going to offer Lazenby.

Bruce jumped into his Mercedes and drove away. He arrived at Betty Ting Pei's second-floor apartment at 67 Beacon Hill Road around 1 p.m. It was a one-bedroom with parquet flooring, wooden walls, and thick blue curtains. They spent the next several hours alone together. "I was his girlfriend," Betty says. There was some sex and some hash, but no alcohol or harder drugs. Mostly Bruce was hyped about his meeting with George Lazenby and what it meant for his movie. He offered Betty the role of the love interest. Betty claims she resisted the idea, because she didn't feel comfortable playing his girlfriend on-screen while being his mistress in real life. "I never wanted to make the movie," she says. "I would feel kind of embarrassed to face someone I love."

Raymond Chow arrived at Betty's apartment around 6 p.m. It is not entirely clear why. Chow and Morgan had been waiting all afternoon for Bruce to return to Golden Harvest to work out the deal offer for Lazenby. Perhaps Raymond called Bruce to inquire when he would come back and Bruce told Raymond to meet him at Betty's place. If Betty was reticent about accepting a role in the film, perhaps Bruce wanted Raymond to help him convince her. Or maybe he just needed a chaperone to drive them to dinner to avoid public suspicion.

It was a scorching day—the temperature at 90°F and the humidity at 84 percent—the hottest day of the month. "Bruce wasn't feeling very well," Chow recalls. "I wasn't feeling very well either. I think we had some water, and then he was acting." In Bruce's bubbling enthusiasm over *Game of Death*, he jumped up and performed scene after scene. "He was always very active," Raymond says. "In telling the story, he acted out the whole thing. So, that probably made him a little tired and thirsty. After a few sips he seemed to be a little dizzy."

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Immediately after feeling faint, Bruce complained of a headache. It was nearing 7:30. They were supposed to pick up Lazenby for dinner. Betty had already changed her clothes and was ready to go, but the pain in Bruce's head had grown worse. When Bruce said he wanted to rest, Chow jumped up awkwardly and tried to leave. "Raymond thought it was an excuse," Betty recalls with a smile. Betty gave Bruce one of her Equagesic pills—a common prescription pain medication. She says this wasn't the first time: "Bruce had taken them before."

Raymond suggested he go first and they could come later. Bruce went into Betty's bedroom, undressed, and sank into her mattress lying on the floor like a futon. Betty shut

the door to the bedroom, went into the living room, and sat down on the couch to watch TV. Raymond departed around 7:45 to pick up Lazenby at the Hyatt and drive him to a Japanese restaurant at the Miramar Hotel.

After thirty minutes waiting at the bar with Lazenby, Chow called Betty's apartment. She told him Bruce was still asleep and Raymond and George should have dinner without them. When Raymond finished his dinner with Lazenby at 9:30, he telephoned Betty again. She said Bruce was still asleep, but she would try to wake him. Afraid of disturbing him, Betty opened the door slowly, crept into the bedroom, kneeled down beside him, and whispered, "Bruce, Bruce." He didn't stir. She pushed his shoulder and said a little louder, "Bruce, Bruce," but he still didn't wake up. Panic rising, she shook him and shouted, "Bruce! Bruce!"

Betty called Raymond back at the restaurant in hysterics—she couldn't wake him.

Raymond told her to calm down. He would drive over to the flat immediately. Raymond flashed back to May 10, when Bruce had nearly died of a cerebral edema. He called Dr. Langford, the doctor who had saved Bruce's life, at home, but his line was busy.

Raymond raced across town to Betty's apartment. This was before cell phones, so at stoplights Raymond repeatedly jumped out of his car to use a pay phone to redial Langford, whose line remained busy. (He later learned that Langford's daughter was on the phone with her boyfriend.)

When Chow arrived at the apartment, he found Bruce undressed, lying flat on her mattress, and Betty crumpled next to him in a state of shock.

"Bruce, Bruce, Bruce," Betty kept calling out, her voice hoarse.

Bruce Lee did not respond. Raymond Chow realized he was too late. His star was already dead.

As he stood there looking down on Bruce's lifeless body and Betty's sobbing frame, the enormous danger of the situation must have dawned on Raymond. The most famous man in Hong Kong was dead in his mistress's bed, and the two of them were the only witnesses. The scandal would consume them. The press would blame them. It could end their careers, maybe even put them in legal jeopardy. If Raymond's original imperative was to save Bruce's life, now his immediate goal was clear: Bruce Lee had to die somewhere else besides his mistress's apartment.

Raymond re-dressed Bruce's body. He buttoned up his shirt, put on his European-style trousers, and laced up his high-heeled platform boots. Chow may have considered moving the body—Bruce's home was only a five-minute drive away. He may also have considered driving the body to the hospital himself—Baptist Hospital, where Bruce had

gone on May 10, was only a three-minute drive in the opposite direction. The death of a superstar at home or at a hospital would shock but not scandalize the public.

Ultimately, Chow decided to bring in a doctor. He told Betty Ting Pei to call her personal concierge physician, Dr. Eugene Chu Poh-hwey, who worked at Baptist Hospital. Betty implored Dr. Chu to come over to her apartment to treat a friend in need of help. She did not tell the good doctor the name of the patient or his condition.

When Dr. Chu arrived, he found Bruce Lee lying in bed deeply comatose and not rousable. His pulse was not perceptible and the heartbeat was not audible. There was no respiration and no sign of life. He tried to revive Bruce for ten minutes without success.

Bruce Lee and actor John Saxon with producer Raymond Chow on the set of the movie *Enter the Dragon*, 1973.

Stanley Bielecki Movie Collection/Getty Images

At this point, it must have been abundantly clear to Dr. Chu that Bruce Lee had died before he arrived. It seems likely that Raymond explained to Dr. Chu the gravity of the situation and pleaded with him to drive Bruce's body to Baptist Hospital, which was only half a mile away, in order to limit the number of witnesses. Instead Dr. Chu decided to call an ambulance to treat a person who had "collapsed." The ambulance officials were not told it was Bruce Lee or that he was already deceased. Dr. Chu insisted that the "patient" be taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which was twenty-five minutes away, rather than the much closer Baptist, presumably because he didn't want to bring this radioactive scandal to his place of employment. He would go along with the ruse but only so far.

Before the ambulance had even arrived, Raymond, the veteran producer, took control of the production. He told Betty not to say anything to the press. Then he called Bruce's wife at her home: "Would you go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital right away, Linda. Bruce is on the way there—in an ambulance."

"What's the matter?" Linda demanded.

"I don't know—something like the last time."

It took seven minutes for the two paramedics and the ambulance driver to arrive at the scene around 10:30 p.m. The senior paramedic, Pang Tak Sun, found the patient, who he didn't immediately recognize, lying on his back on the mattress on the floor. Pang couldn't find a pulse and the patient wasn't breathing. He performed CPR and gave artificial oxygen. There was no change in the patient. The paramedics carried him to the ambulance. Raymond Chow and Dr. Chu jumped in back with them. The paramedics continued to treat Bruce's lifeless body during the lengthy ride to Queen Elizabeth. Pang later explained why he continued treatment long after there was any hope of success:

“As a first aid man even if a person was apparently dead, I have invariably to treat him or her as a still living person and apply my first aid.”

Linda arrived at Queen Elizabeth fifteen minutes before the ambulance. When she asked about her husband, the man at the front desk said, “Somebody must be joking—we don’t know anything about it.” She was about to call home when she saw Bruce being wheeled past her into the emergency room. He appeared unconscious to her. A team of doctors began massaging his heart. “It never occurred to me that he might die, let alone that he might already be dead,” she recalls. After a minute or so, they suddenly rushed Bruce upstairs and she had to run after the gurney to an intensive care unit. The team injected drugs directly into Bruce’s heart and applied electric shock. Someone tried to pull Linda away, saying, “You don’t want to see this,” but she struggled free and insisted, “Leave me alone—I want to know what’s happening.” Then she noticed that the EKG machine recording Bruce’s heart was flatlined. The doctors finally gave up the macabre charade of trying to revive a man who had died long before he arrived at the hospital. On some level Linda knew the truth but she still couldn’t admit it to herself. She asked one of the doctors, “Is he alive?” He shook his head.

Linda wandered along the corridor by herself. The head of the medical team asked her if she wanted an autopsy. “Yes, I want to know how he died,” she said.

A little after 11:30 p.m. telephones across Hong Kong started ringing with the news: Bruce Lee was dead at the age of thirty-two. The cause of death was unknown.

A call was made to Charles Sutcliffe, Hong Kong’s new police commissioner. He was hosting a party at his home on Victoria Peak for prominent members of the media. As soon as word spread, all of his guests headed for the door. “Come back after it’s over,” Sutcliffe told the reporters as they bolted for Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

One of Sutcliffe’s guests was Ted Thomas, the British disc jockey who interviewed Lee in 1971. By the time Thomas and his colleagues arrived, the police had already cordoned off the hospital. A scrum of TV cameramen and newspaper reporters were staking out the entrance. “Nobody got in,” Thomas says.

Without any official announcement, rumors swirled among the journalists outside the hospital about how Bruce Lee had died. At nearby pay phones reporters frantically called their sources. One of them reached Charles Lowe, the assistant director on *Enter the Dragon* and Bruce’s sake drinking buddy.

“Someone told me Bruce Lee died in a fight,” the reporter said. “Can you confirm?”

“Rumors!” Lowe replied with a sinking feeling. “It’s just a rumor.”

“He was beaten up by ten or twenty people in Tsim Sha Tsui,” the reporter continued, “or

maybe you already know?"

"You're crazy!" Lowe shouted and hung up.

Worried, he called over to Bruce's residence. Eight-year-old Brandon picked up the phone. "Is your dad home?" Lowe asked.

"No home," Brandon said in Cantonese.

"Where is he?"

"Movie! Movie! Movie!"

As Raymond and Linda approached the doors of the hospital to leave, the entrance lit up with the flashes of photographers' bulbs. Seeing they were trapped, they retreated.

Raymond telephoned his wife and asked her to pick them up. Realizing the media would swarm Bruce's home, Chow then called Dr. Langford, who lived nearby, and asked if he and Linda could stop by his house.

Linda suddenly insisted on going back to see her husband one more time to make certain that he was really gone. Standing next to his body, she says, "I felt an incredible strength surge through my body and spirit. The determination and courage of Bruce himself passed to me. In a flash I knew what lay ahead and how I should deal with everything in the best possible way for Bruce, Brandon, and Shannon."

At 12:30 a.m., the police arrived at Betty Ting Pei's apartment. They did not tell her that Bruce was dead. Deeply upset, she could not bring herself to ask about his condition.

After the ambulance had left her apartment building, she had called her mother and her younger brother, who were there comforting her as the police searched the premises.

They found no sign of struggle or a physical altercation. The mattress on the floor was neatly made up. They put into evidence three glasses on the living room table, two half-empty bottles of 7-Up and Schweppes Ginger Beer, and an opened tinfoil package of Equagesic pills. Betty gave a full statement to the police. Given the consistency of Raymond's and Betty's later testimony, it seems likely he had already coached her in what to say. She was a professional actress and skilled at memorizing her lines.

Linda Lee, widow of Bruce Lee, in February 1975

Mirrorpix via Getty Images

Raymond had successfully raised Bruce Lee from the dead just long enough that he could officially die somewhere besides Betty's apartment. To complete the cover-up, he needed to stage-manage one other player in this morbid drama.

He arrived with Linda at Dr. Langford's house around 1 a.m. Linda was distraught. She didn't know what to do, what to tell the reporters. She loved her husband and was enormously proud of him.

“What do you know about Bruce and other women?” Linda asked Dr. Langford. “Was he a philanderer?”

“To the best of my knowledge,” Dr. Langford answered carefully, “he had no other relationships.”

“The Hong Kong press will devour him,” Linda said. “How do I keep them from saying tawdry things?”

Linda deliberated with Raymond in Dr. Langford’s living room. Together they decided what statement they’d give to reporters.

Andre Morgan received a call from Raymond Chow in the middle of the night. He rushed over to Golden Harvest, where Chow was already in full damage control. Morgan was assigned to write the English-language press releases, while Raymond authorized the releases to the Chinese media. After some internal debate, Golden Harvest settled on the wording of its written statement: Bruce Lee collapsed at his home while walking in his garden with his wife, Linda. Golden Harvest mourns the loss of a great star.

Around the same time Queen Elizabeth Hospital released its formal explanation: the actor Bruce Lee died of an acute cerebral edema. The cause of the edema is yet unknown.

Based on these two accounts, the Hong Kong press reported to the public that their hero had died from a brain edema of unknown origins while strolling in his home garden with his beloved wife. “We wanted to protect Bruce’s image and reputation and to protect Linda’s and the children’s feelings,” explains Morgan. “We were not stupid enough to believe that we were not going to get tagged out. It was a matter of how long we could delay.”

This fabricated version of Bruce Lee’s death held up for three days.

H.S. Chow, an intrepid reporter who had profiled Bruce Lee multiple times for The China Mail, was suspicious of Golden Harvest’s picturesque account and began calling his sources. Every Hong Kong hospital kept a written ambulance log listing pickup addresses. It took only two days for Chow to find the right ambulance log, track down the driver, and convince him to talk. Ambulance #40 had picked up Bruce Lee from a second-floor apartment at 67 Beacon Hill Road, but Bruce’s home was at 41 Cumberland Road. After a few more phone calls, H.S. Chow discovered that the occupant of the Beacon Hill Road apartment was Betty Ting Pei. “Bless H.S. Chow’s heart,” says Morgan. “We later hired him to be one of Golden Harvest’s PR flacks.”

In 1973 Hong Kong had four English-language dailies and 101 Chinese papers, all fighting for a circulation totaling one and a quarter million readers. Out of this cutthroat

environment was born the notorious “Mosquito Press”—sensationalist scandal sheets that “print with a sting.” The discovery of the cover-up—Hong Kong’s most famous star actually died in the flat of an attractive actress—caused the Mosquitoes to swarm. Under the headline “Who’s Lying on Li’s Death,” The China Mail wrote, “Film star Bruce Li spent his last hours at the flat of beautiful actress Ting Pei—not at his own home as was previously reported.” Reacting to the revelation, The China Star splashed across its front page: “Bruce Lee Shock.”

Having been tagged out so quickly, Raymond Chow stopped taking press calls and tried to regroup. Betty was left alone in her apartment to face the media. She made the foolish error of doubling down on the initial fabrication. “On Friday night when he died I was not at home—I had gone out with my mother,” she claimed to reporters. “I last met him several months ago when we came across each other in the street.” Bruce’s older brother, Peter, supported her story and dismissed The China Mail’s allegations as “fantasy.”

To contradict her assertion, the tabloids interviewed Betty’s neighbors, who confirmed that Lee had been a regular weekly visitor to her apartment for months prior to his death. The China Star ran a double-entendre headline: “Betty Ting Pei’s Fragrant Chamber Killed the Dragon.”

After days of mauling in the press, Raymond, in coordination with Linda and Betty, came up with a new cover story. In a classic example of rolling disclosure, they admitted what could not be denied and denied what the press could not prove. To protect Bruce’s reputation as a family man for Linda’s and the children’s sake, not to mention the large investment Golden Harvest had made in the soon-to-be-released *Enter the Dragon*, they refuted any romantic relationship between Bruce and Betty. To avoid legal jeopardy for Betty and Raymond, they maintained that Bruce had died at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. All of this required concocting a new timeline. It could not be admitted that Bruce was alone with Betty. He needed a chaperone.

According to Linda’s new account, “it was around noon on July 20, 1973, and I was prepared to leave our Kowloon house to lunch with a girlfriend. Bruce was in his study. He told me that Raymond Chow was due to come over that afternoon to talk about script ideas for *Game of Death*, and that they would probably dine later with George Lazenby. Bruce was his usual industrious self when I left him. That was the last conversation I ever had with my husband.”

Raymond, who was Bruce’s business, not his writing, partner, claimed that he arrived at Bruce’s house at 3 p.m. Together they worked on the script for *Game of Death* until 5 p.m. before they drove to Betty Ting Pei’s apartment to offer her a leading role in the

movie. It was a business meeting and nothing else. Betty and Bruce were just friends. At 7 p.m. Bruce complained of a headache. At 7:30 it grew worse and Betty offered him one of her Equagesic pills, which consists of 325 mg of aspirin and 200 mg of meprobamate—a mild muscle relaxant. Bruce went into Betty's bedroom to lie down. Raymond left to pick up Lazenby.

After Raymond called several times to inquire about Bruce, Betty discovered she couldn't wake him. Raymond drove over to the flat immediately. When Raymond arrived at the apartment, Bruce appeared to be very sound asleep. His attempts to rouse Bruce failed. Betty called her personal physician, Dr. Eugene Chu Poh-hwey, to come over to her apartment and treat a friend. After Dr. Chu examined Bruce, he called an ambulance and instructed the paramedics to take Bruce to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Bruce was officially declared dead at the hospital at 11:30 p.m.

This updated version of Bruce Lee's death would hold up for thirty years.

Bruce's older brother, Peter, identified the body at the mortuary of Queen Elizabeth Hospital at 2:30 p.m. on July 23. In accordance with Linda's wishes and the police investigation, a full autopsy was performed after the identification by Dr. R.R. Lycette. "The body is that of a well-built Chinese male of about 30 years of age and is 172 cm in length," states Dr. Lycette's autopsy report. His examination found no evidence of foul play. "The scalp is free of bruising and the skull shows no evidence of fracture or injury, either recent, or old. There are no recent or old needle marks." His heart was normal as were the blood vessels in his brain. Bruce didn't die of a heart attack or a brain aneurysm. The only abnormalities Dr. Lycette could find were congestion in the lungs, intestines, and kidneys, and swelling in the brain. "The brain is very tense beneath the covering dura. The brain weighs 1,575 grams. A normal brain weighs up to 1,400 grams." His conclusion: "Congestions and edema of the brain (i.e. excessive fluid accumulation), were the immediate cause of death. The congestion of the lungs and other organs is strongly suggestive of the brain edema first stopping respiratory function, while the heart continued to pump blood into the body's arteries, which were dilating because of lack of oxygen. The edema finally caused failure of cardiac centers in the brain and stopped the heart."

While Dr. Lycette was certain that an acute cerebral edema (brain swelling) killed Bruce, the reason for the edema was a mystery. "The findings provide no definite evidence as to the cause of the cerebral edema." The last line of the autopsy did suggest a line of investigation: "It is possible that the edema is the result of some drug intoxication."

What led Dr. Lycette to this conclusion were the two items he found in Bruce's stomach:

remnants of the Equagesic pill and small traces of cannabis (hash). Suspecting cannabis, Dr. Lycette met with Dr. Donald Langford and Dr. Peter Wu, the two doctors who had saved Bruce's life on May 10. Langford and Wu were already convinced cannabis was responsible for his first collapse. They persuaded Dr. Lycette it was the leading candidate for his death on July 20. "I believe the most likely cause of death is cannabis intoxication," Dr. Lycette wrote in a letter, "either due to drug idiosyncrasy or massive overdose."

Almost as soon as Dr. Lycette discovered hash in Bruce's stomach, someone in his office leaked it to the press. Surprisingly, in a colony which in 1973 recorded the seizure of 1,748 kilos of opium, 399 kilos of morphine, and 50 kilos of heroin, cannabis was still regarded by the Hong Kong police, press, and public as a major evil—a deadly Western hippie drug that turned kids against their parents. The tabloids broadcast that Bruce Lee had been using marijuana before he died. The story had all the elements for a perfect scandal: sex, drugs, deception, and death. "The Hong Kong press simply went wild," Linda recalls.

Bruce's afternoon rendezvous with Betty was turned into a drug-fueled orgy. Starting with the leaked marijuana story, the press piled on substance after illegal substance, turning him from a fitness freak into a junkie. The tabloids reported as fact to their credulous readers that Bruce had died from an overdose of "707," Hong Kong's equivalent of Spanish Fly—a supposedly potent sexual stimulant in the days before Viagra. Then they linked Bruce to a cornucopia of other drugs ranging from LSD to heroin to cocaine. On July 25, The Oriental Daily wrote, "It has come to our attention that a straw and several paper baggies full of powder were found by Lee's deathbed."

Betty Ting Pei poses next to a Bruce Lee portrait during the exhibition opening ceremony of Bruce Lee's 30 anniversary of his death in Hong Kong in July 2003

THOMAS CHENG/AFP/Getty Images

Starting with "scarlet woman" Betty, the press piled on starlet after starlet, turning Bruce from a superhero into a superstud. "The press decided they could add some spice to the story by not only including Betty Ting, but all his 'other mistresses,'" says Andre Morgan. "What they did was to go back through all the files and got every photograph of him with a well known actress posing together. They had five pages of him with different chicks, you know, the arm around, smiling, the whole bit. The stories were rampant, stories about him dying from an overdose, dying from screwing too much, dying with an erection, dying from being hacked to death by young thugs, poisoned by his servant. There was one story that he wasn't really dead."

Many admirers simply could not accept that someone as young and vital as Bruce Lee had departed. The China Mail reported that Malaysians in Penang believed news reports of his demise were a ghoulish publicity stunt for *Game of Death*: “The fans have been entering into heated argument over the issue and are even placing bets.”

Because Bruce blurred the line between his life and his big-screen persona, many of his fans wanted to transform his death into one of his movies. “There are some who think Japanese martial artists might have taken a hand in Lee’s death. Besides the traditional Japanese-Chinese rivalry, Lee always saved his special venom for Japanese karate and judo,” wrote Alex Ben Block in the first biography of Bruce Lee (1974). “In Japan there is a tradition of assassins known as Ninja. Every Ninja was an accomplished pharmacist, skilled in preparing different poisons.”

If it wasn’t ninjas, it might have been a jealous kung fu master armed with the magical superpower of the delayed death touch—*dim mak* in Cantonese. “A Malaysian named Kay Wah Lee has dedicated most of his adult life to studying the ancient delayed-death-strike system,” wrote Block. “He claims it’s possible to walk down the street, lay his hand on a victim, and two years later to the day (or whatever elapse of time is desired), the victim will die.”

While the press entertained these kung fu movie fantasies, most of the scandal sheets reveled in carnal conspiracies. “During a recent taxi ride in Taiwan, the conversation steered around to Lee’s death,” wrote Don Atyeo in the second Bruce Lee biography (1975). “‘Ah yes,’ nodded the cab driver knowingly, ‘too much sex.’ Which in a nutshell sums up much current popular Eastern sentiment.”

Rumors that Lee died with an erection were so prevalent that tabloid reporters bribed their way into the mortuary to snap photos of his cadaver. “I paid the morgue beautician HK\$1,500 to let me take pictures of Lee’s corpse,” says Patrick Wang, founder of the *Kam Yeh Pao* tabloid. “After snapping his face, I tried to photograph further down his body. The woman shoved me aside and dragged me out of the morgue, saying that I would get her fired.”

While Patrick Wang wasn’t able to prove priapism, his photographs of Bruce’s face did show bloating. When film from Bruce’s Hong Kong funeral also captured a swollen and distorted face underneath the glass of his coffin, it set off a new round of conspiracy theories: a bloated face proved Bruce was poisoned! According to Andre Morgan, the explanation was more prosaic—Bruce’s face was swollen because of a botched embalming job. “Most bodies in Hong Kong are cremated because burial spots are so expensive,” Morgan says. “The truth is they were really awful embalmers.”

After Bruce’s Hong Kong funeral, Linda Lee issued a public statement from Kai Tak Airport

before leaving to bury her husband in Seattle. She implored the press and populace to stop speculating about Bruce's death. "Although we do not have the final autopsy report, I have no suspicion of anything other than natural death," she said. "I myself do not hold any person or people responsible for his death. Fate has ways we cannot change. The only thing of importance is that Bruce is gone and will not return." A Golden Harvest representative pleaded, "Now that a great star is dead, it's the wish of most film people to let him die a hero. The reports, if true, will undoubtedly ruin his image. And they will break the heart of numerous Lee fans."

Actor Steve McQueen straightens the sign on casket at Bruce Lee's funeral in Seattle
Bettmann Archive

Brokenhearted Hong Kong fans were furious that Linda was taking Bruce's body to Seattle. "There was a lot of hostility, anger, and suspicion," says Morgan. "Suspicion there had been foul play, that it was all a setup, that he had been kidnapped." In an attempt to allay these suspicions, Golden Harvest sent a cameraman to film Bruce's funeral in Seattle and send back the footage for news reports in Hong Kong, but it only made matters worse.

To legally transport his body from Hong Kong to America, Bruce's coffin, which had a white silk interior and a protective glass enclosure around his body, was sealed inside a lead-lined shipping container and then laid inside a wooden shipping crate. When the crate was opened in Seattle it was discovered that the coffin had rubbed against the lead lining during transport, severely marring the exterior. When the casket was opened, Andre Morgan saw that the white silk interior had been stained blue from Bruce's suit. "The freight area of a 747 is not pressurized," Morgan explains. "Before we left, the glass had sealed the 89 degree and 98 percent humidity Hong Kong air inside the coffin. When the 747 leveled off at 38,000 feet, the air condensed on the glass and started to drip. It was like a small rainstorm inside his coffin." Morgan decided a new coffin was needed and purchased the closest model available: "It was slightly darker brown with a pleated velvet interior."

Sharp-eyed viewers back in Hong Kong noticed the casket was different and accused Golden Harvest of switching the bodies. "It all spun out of control," says Morgan, "from what were very easy things to explain." Attempts to clarify only led to more speculation. The scratched and stained casket was taken as a sign that Bruce's soul was not resting peacefully. Suddenly, everyone became a soothsayer looking for omens. Some blamed bad feng shui: On July 18 a typhoon struck Hong Kong and carried away the feng shui reflector—a small octagon wooden frame—Bruce had installed on his roof, but, before he could replace it, he was dead. Others believed he was cursed: when Lee Little

Dragon took up residence in the neighborhood of Kowloon Tong, which is Cantonese for “Nine Dragon Pond,” it caused anger and rivalry among those magical beasts, who struck him down.

All of this fevered speculation had real-world consequences. The press hounded Betty Ting Pei. “It seems that people want me to die,” she lamented to *The China Star*, “and if this continues, I just don’t want to live on. Bruce is dead. Why don’t you leave it at that?” When her appeals for mercy failed to stop the onslaught of negative stories, she threatened to sue the press if the libel continued. In response, one of the tabloids ran a front-page headline: “Betty Ting, Sue Us!” over a fresh list of disclosures, causing the twenty-six-year-old to lock herself in her apartment. One of her close friends revealed, “She doesn’t do much of anything except watch television.”

The virulence of the coverage and the festering stew of suspicion quickly took a turn for the truly frightening. Students in Kuala Lumpur demonstrated carrying placards that read: “Betty Killed Bruce.” Rumors began spreading in Hong Kong that a hit had been taken out on her life. In early August, a bomb threat was called in to the police. They discovered in a public square a suspicious brown paper package covered in Chinese writing: “Betty Ting knows the cause of Bruce Lee’s death.” The bomb turned out to be a hoax, filled only with rubbish, but over the next few weeks three more fake bombs were planted across the city with such messages as “Revenge for Bruce Lee.”

The British colonial government could safely ignore a celebrity scandal, but bomb threats were another matter. Memories of the 1967 leftist riots, which endangered British control of Hong Kong, were still raw. A minor labor dispute had sparked a violent revolt. Pro-Communist Chinese radicals, who wanted to push the British out and rejoin mainland China, planted real bombs, mixed with even more decoys, throughout the city—over eight thousand in total by the end. Pro-British politicians, journalists, and police officers were killed, as were many innocent victims.

As concern grew that the current situation might spiral into widespread strife, the government felt compelled to act. Officials ordered a full-scale investigation into Bruce Lee’s death.

End of article

Bettmann Archive

Bruce Lee in *Fists of Fury* (1973)

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Here are the **latest major NBA offseason trades and free agency moves** as of July 1, 2025:

Blockbuster Trades:

- **Kevin Durant** has been traded from the Phoenix Suns to the Houston Rockets. In return, the Suns receive **Jalen Green, Dillon Brooks, the 10th pick in the 2025 NBA Draft, and five second-round picks**^[1].
- The **Memphis Grizzlies** traded **Desmond Bane** to the Orlando Magic for **Kentavious Caldwell-Pope, Cole Anthony, four future first-round picks, and a future first-round pick swap**^[1].
- The **Boston Celtics, Atlanta Hawks, and Brooklyn Nets** completed a three-team trade:
 - **Kristaps Porzingis** and a second-round pick to the Hawks
 - **Terance Mann** and Atlanta's No. 22 pick (2025) to the Nets
 - **Georges Niang** and a second-rounder to the Celtics^[1].
- The **Boston Celtics** traded **Jrue Holiday** to the **Portland Trail Blazers** for **Anfernee Simons** and two future second-round picks^[1].
- The **New Orleans Pelicans** sent **CJ McCollum, Kelly Olynyk, and a future second-round pick** to the **Washington Wizards** for **Jordan Poole, Saddiq Bey, and the No. 40 pick in the 2025 draft**^[1].

Notable Free Agency Signings:

- **LeBron James** will remain with the Los Angeles Lakers, exercising his player option for the 2025-26 season^[2].
- **James Harden** is set to re-sign with the LA Clippers on a new deal worth \$81.5 million^[2].
- **Kyrie Irving** is declining his \$43 million player option but intends to sign a three-year, \$119 million contract to stay with the Dallas Mavericks^[1].
- **Fred VanVleet** will stay with the Houston Rockets on a two-year, \$50 million deal^[1].
- **Myles Turner** has agreed to a four-year, \$107 million deal with the Milwaukee Bucks^[2].

- **Julius Randle** is signing a three-year, \$100 million extension with the Minnesota Timberwolves^[2].
- **Bobby Portis** plans to re-sign with the Milwaukee Bucks on a three-year, \$44 million deal^[2].
- **Jaylin Williams** has signed a three-year, \$24 million extension with the Oklahoma City Thunder^[2].

Other Key Moves:

- **Deandre Ayton** has entered free agency after a buyout from the Portland Trail Blazers^[2].
- **Matisse Thybulle** is picking up his \$11.5 million player option with the Trail Blazers^[1].
- **Khris Middleton** has picked up his \$33.3 million option with the Washington Wizards^[1].

These moves are shaping the landscape of the 2025-26 NBA season, with several teams making significant roster changes and star players either staying put or finding new homes^{[2][1]}.

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1. https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/45506849/nba-free-agency-2025-latest-signings-news-buzz-trades-reports
2. <https://www.nba.com/news/nba-offseason-roundup-2025>